

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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IO-10 SAB-01 SAM-01 /069 W

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R 090547Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3926

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMZMBASSY BEIRUT 2052

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2595

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE

SUBJ: SHIHABI DISCUSSES SYRIAN MEDIATION IN LEBANON.

1. ASKED SYRIAN COS SHIHABI JULY 7 TO COMMENT ON LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE FOLLOWING HIS PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT ALONG WITH FONMIN KHADDAM DURING PAST WEEKS IN MEDIATING ROLE. SHIHABI REPLIED THAT REGRETTABLY THE FACTORS WHICH HAD PRECIPITATED JUNE CONFLICT IN LEBANON WERE STILL VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE BY DATE HE AND KHADDAM RETURNED TO DAMASCUS. ELEMENTS ON "BOTH SIDES" OF LINES -- HE WOULD NOT BE MORE SPECIFIC -- COULD EASILY OVERTURN THE WHOLE FRAGILE ARRANGEMENT.

2. ASKED IF HE HAD FOUND ANY ONE LEBANESE LEADER ESPECIALLY HELPFUL TO THE SYRIANS IN THEIR MEDIATION ROLE, SHIHABI JUST LOOKED AT ME WITH SURPRISE. HE THEN TICKED OFF BY NAME EVERY PROMINENT LEADER ON LEBANESE POLITICAL STAGE AND DISMISSED THEM AS "EQUALLY STUPID AND SHORT-SIGHTED POLITICAL RELICS. WHEN I SAID "STUPID" WAS A PECULIAR TERM TO APPLY TO THE LEBANESE, HE WITHDREW IT SAYING, "THE LEBANESE LEADERS ARE CLEVER BUT NOT WISE, CLEVER LIKE

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FOXES." SHIHABI RECALLED THAT AT ONE POINT IN NEGOTIATIONS

KHADDAM HAD BECOME SO FRUSTRATED HE HAD TOLD ASSEMBLED
LEBANESE LEADERS THAT LEBANON NEEDED AN INDIRA GANDHI SINCE
THERE WASN'T A MAN IN TOWN WHO COULD LEAD THE COUNTRY.
SHIHABI CONCLUDED BEMUSEDLY THAT SYRIAN LEADERSHIP WAS
DRAWN FROM A YOUNGER GENERATION AND SIMPLY DID NOT SPEAK THE
SAME LANGUAGE AS THE LEBANESE.

3.SHIHABI SAID HE SHARES KARAMI'S CONVICTION THAT ISRAELI
AGENTS HAD BEEN AT WORK FANNING THE FLAMES IN BEIRUT THROUGHOUT
THE LEBANESE CRISES. HE ACKNOWLEDGED HE HAD NO HARD EVIDENCE
OF THIS.
MURPHY

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